المجلس الإسلامي
Islamic Council

PRESS RELEASE

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"In recent years the political situation in Egypt and Tunisia has been marked by increasing persecution of the opposition and violation of human rights", said Mr. Salem Azzam, Secretary General of the London-based Islamic Council.

Mr. Azzam made the statement at a press conference called by the Islamic Council at the London Press Centre on Thursday, 18th June, 1987 to review the political situation in Egypt and Tunisia and the repressive measures and human rights violations of the regimes in those countries. Representatives of the opposition groups in Egypt and Tunisia also participated in the conference.

Mr. Azzam said that the situation in Tunisia was appalling and gave details of repressive measures of the Bourguiba regime against the opposition groups and the university students. He expressed grave concern about the recent arrests of people belonging on the Islamic Tendency Movement, including its chairman Professor Rashed Al Ghannoushi. He said that according to reports President Habib Bourguiba is determined to send the leadership of the Islamic Tendency Movement to the gallows and award long prison sentences to others. Mr. Azzam specially criticized Bourguiba's oppressive laws which allow incommunicado detention for unlimited periods without access to families or lawyers.

Turning to Egypt, he said that the situation there became much worse since last April's general elections.

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The election campaign was marred by the arrest, torture and imprisonment of thousands of people belonging to the opposition groups. He accused the Mubarak regime of worst forms of physical and mental torture.

Mr. Azzam rejected Mubarak regime's accusation of violence by the opposition. He said that what the regime calls opposition-violence is nothing but a reaction to the state terrorism.

He also accused the Mubarak regime of mischief in creating a rift between Muslims and Christians of the Coptic Church and then using the situation to crack down on the opposition.

He was particularly critical of the regime for its contempt of the judiciary. He said that verdicts of courts on important constitutional and other matters were ignored and violated whenever the regime found them disagreeable.

He said that the aim of Islamic movements was to secure respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and peoples legitimate aspirations. He said that these were the things Islam stood for and that the struggle of the Muslim people for the establishment of an Islamic order in Muslim countries was a struggle for the protection of human life, protection of fundamental human rights and the fulfilment of peoples needs and hopes.

The conference ended with an appeal by the representatives of Al-Jihad Movement in Egypt and Islamic Tendency Movement in Tunisia to the international press, especially the British press, and human rights organisations to pressure the regimes in Egypt and Tunisia to stop persecution and repression of the people, implement human rights and restore fundamental freedoms.